

Underground for the C.I.A. in New York: An Ex-Agent Tells of Spying on Students

By SEYMOUR M. HERSH

A former agent for the Central Intelligence Agency, in recounting the details of his undercover career, says that New York City became a prime C.I.A. domestic spying target during the late nineteen-sixties because it was considered a "big training ground" for radical activities in the United States.

The agent, who spent more than four years in the late nineteen-sixties and early seventies spying on radical groups in New York, told The New York Times that more than 25 C.I.A. agents were assigned to the city at the height of anti-radical activity at Columbia University and elsewhere.

The agents were tightly controlled by senior officials in the New York office of the Domestic Operations Division.

Little-known domestic unit set up in 1964 by the C.I.A. in more than a dozen cities across the nation, the former intelligence official said.

The division's ostensible function then was legal: to coordinate with the American corporations supplying "cover" for C.I.A. agents abroad and to aid in the interrogation of American travelers after their return from foreign countries.

Began in 1967

The former agent's description of life as a domestic C.I.A. spy was provided during a series of interviews last week. The contact with The Times came after publication last Sunday of the first account of the massive spying.

The former agent said that his involvement began with the advent of the Black Panther Party in 1967 and the

increase of antiwar dissent during the last months of the Johnson Administration. "And then it started to snowball from there," the former agent said.

The Times, working with details supplied by the former agent, was able to verify that he served as an undercover intelligence spy, although it was impossible to check all of his information.

The former C.I.A. agent insisted on anonymity, saying that if he was exposed he would be forced to publicly deny any link to the agency.

A high-ranking Government intelligence official with intimate knowledge of C.I.A. operations said yesterday that the former agent's description of life as a domestic spy "seemed a little bit far out." But the official added that he was unable to deny any of the agent's specific allegations, pending a check of files.

The Times, quoting well-placed sources, reported last Sunday that the C.I.A. had violated its charter by conducting massive and illegal intelligence operations aimed at antiwar and other American dissidents inside the United States. Intelligence files on at least 10,000 American citizens also were compiled, the sources said.

Wiretaps and Break-ins

The former intelligence agent said that he and other C.I.A. agents had also participated in telephone wiretaps and break-ins in their efforts to closely monitor the activities of radicals in New York. He added that the C.I.A. had supplied him with "more than 40" psychological assessments of radical leaders during his spy career.

High-ranking C.I.A. officials, including Richard Helms, the former Director of Central Intelligence and now Ambassador to Iran, told Congress in the wake of the Watergate scandals that only two such assessments—done by psychiatrists working for the agency—have ever been prepared on American citizens.

"What we were trying to do," the former C.I.A. agent said in an interview, "was to find out what the radicals were marketing and to learn if they had any new products."

"They were a target company and we were like another company in competition," he added.

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out the United States was conducted by various offices of the Domestic Operations Division, which was initially assigned to such tasks in the mid-nineteen-sixties as infiltrating agents into various ethnic and emigre groups in large cities.
"When I first came to D.O.D." the former agent said, "it was a low-key operation. Mostly we did liaison" with other intelligence agencies.

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